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WITH NATURE ARTICLE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(The following material is provided in anticipation of the most common questions asked about SRI's research on paranormal phenomena. Dr. Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ provided the answers to the questions.)

Question: Is this the first time that such phenomena have been scientifically documented?

Answer: These phenomena have been studied and documented under widely varying degrees of scientific rigor for almost a century, both in the U. S. and England.

Question: Would you describe Geller and Price as "psychics"? What about claims of charlatanism and fakery?

Answer: Geller, Price, and others that we have studied exhibit the ability to view remote objects and events shielded from their ordinary sensory inputs. We have under consideration the hypothesis that all people have this ability to a greater or lesser extent, and we therefore tend to minimize the uniqueness of these subjects with regard to their inherent ability, while emphasizing the degree

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to which they have developed it. We have designed our experiments to be a cheat-proof as possible and we have no evidence of trickery under our experimental conditions. We have consulted with professional magicians as to both techniques and equipment that could be employed by magicians in performing some of the tasks that we have given our test subjects.

Question: What is the significance of this study?

Answer: The significance of our study lies in the fact that we have presented evidence for the existence of a perceptual ability (remote viewing) which appears to function under conditions where the ordinary sensory channels are shielded.

Question: What, in your opinion, is the most significant experiment conducted in this study?

Answer: We consider the EEG experiments to be the most significant because they show that a person can perceive a remote state of affairs, even though this perception might be below the level of awareness. We consider it possible that people who have no present awareness of any paranormal perceptual ability might learn to bring it to conscious awareness with appropriate training techniques.

Question: Do you believe that all or mostly all people possess some type of "paranormal" ability?

Answer: We believe that many people have a latent ability and the necessary

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willingness that may enable them to develop paranormal perceptual abilities to some degree.

Question: Does SRI now maintain a regular facility for psychic research?
Will it conduct more studies in the future?

Answer: SRI has a very limited experimental program in this area. This program will continue to function as determined by expressions of client interest and support.

Question: Where does your research on Geller and Price go from here?

Answer: The Institute's contract with Mr. Geller has expired and we do not have any plans to renew it. Our work with Mr. Price and other subjects in the area of remote viewing continues. In general, we will attempt to make as many physical and physiological measures on our test subjects as is practicable in the attempt to try to uncover any extraordinary biological function. Particular attention is being paid to those measurements that tend to indicate state of consciousness and emotion, such as polygraphic measurements, including galvanic skin response, EEG, and other types of physiological measurements.

Question: What about your personal views on psychic phenomena, outside of the laboratory--could a private bias either for or against this area of study have affected or prejudiced your research?

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Answer: We have indicated that we attempt to make our experiments as cheat-proof as possible. We also attempt to make our experiments independent of any bias that may exist in the minds of the experimenters and test subjects. Where appropriate, a panel of judges is used to evaluate the experimental results. These judges are selected by SRI management, and an attempt is made to use judges with no known bias in this field of research. In scientific research, experiments are not conducted unless the experimenter believes in the possibility of a successful outcome. The experiments conducted here were not different--both the experimenters and the test subjects believed that successful results were possible.

In general, there are a great many ways for an experiment to fail, while there are only a few ways for it to succeed. One could demonstrate the non-existence of many known physical laws by carelessly performing one of the classical experiments from this history of physics. Commitment to the successful outcome of an experiment and belief in the possibility of success will not affect the validity of the results if the experiment has been designed to be independent of these beliefs and commitments.

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